

The IPC's weekly update on coronavirus disease (COVID-19) - 04/06/2020

The purpose of this update is to keep everyone within the Paralympic Movement informed of the latest developments with the COVID-19 pandemic and how it relates to the Paralympic Games and Para sport.

This week our introductory article is from another Paralympic athlete, one with a very different story to tell, and one which details the hardship that COVID-19 can bring. George Wyndham is a Para table tennis player and was Sierra Leone's sole representative at the Rio 2016 Paralympic Games.

Wyndham's world has been put on hold because of COVID-19. He hasn't trained since mid-February as a result of lockdown restrictions in Sierra Leone, but more importantly for him, no training and no competition has, overnight, meant he has no income.

A Proud Paralympian Educator, Wyndham has taken a full-time position working for a government organisation that goes into local communities and teaches people about the dangers of COVID-19 and how they can best protect themselves. He admits that life is tough for him and his fellow country people but that he is living for the day he can train again.

We continue to use the IPC's digital channels to increase awareness of all the positive work that is taking place in the Paralympic Movement right now. Sports, National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) and athletes continue to do amazing work around the world, but we wanted to highlight one inspiring story this week.

We really want to use this mail to highlight initiatives that NPCs and International Federations (IFs) are doing, but also show the work that they are doing to restart sport. If you would like to let us know about your story or raise awareness of any other initiative, then please get in contact at media@paralympic.org.

This week's update contains the following information:

- "I'm not training, I'm just trying to survive", by George Wyndham, Paralympian from Sierra Leone
- IPC updates - including three more sports having updated qualification regulations
- World Health Organisation update - including updated guidance on planning for mass gatherings
- Latest media statements from the IPC - 'Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes'

"I'm not training, I'm just trying to survive", by George Wyndham, Paralympian from Sierra Leone

What I am praying for is that tomorrow they announce COVID-19 is done, that everything goes back to normal and we can train.

This has been a difficult time. I have not been able to train since February. I returned from Germany, where I was working on the Proud Paralympian Educators programme. But at the same time as I was coming back, Sierra Leone also had its first case of the coronavirus come into the country.

Overnight everything in Sierra Leone stopped. Sport activities were one of the first things to halt. I had qualification events in Jordan, Egypt and Slovenia to prepare for, so I was worried about my fitness with all sport activities banned. Then when it was announced that the Paralympic Games would be postponed to 2021, I thought 'wow, I will go back to zero'. My first thought was how could I go along with life, how could I take care of myself and family?

My only source of income is my sport. I receive stipends for going to training and competitions, that's what I survive on. But since this coronavirus has come, everything has just ceased. No competitions, no training, means no source of income for me now. Our NPC is small and sadly they can't take care of us. We are on our own and I'm just trying to survive.

At first, I sat for a month without doing anything. I was just sitting and hoping what tomorrow would bring for me. That tomorrow did come. I heard about the Emergency Operational Centre (EOC), the organisation that is fighting coronavirus in Sierra Leone by going around the country and educating people about sanitisation.

The EOC said they were looking for all kinds of people, including those with disabilities. As I am one of the most widely known persons with a disability in Sierra Leone, I thought my reputation would make people want to hear what I had to say and the message I was giving out.

I am going around communities educating people about COVID-19. One of my jobs is to go into shops, marketplaces and public places and make sure that people know coronavirus is real. I tell them about the preventative things they can do, like wear facial masks, avoid public gatherings, practice social distancing and frequently wash their hands.

That's the job I currently have, to fight COVID-19 in my country with the EOC. I get roughly 100 dollars a month to do it, but the reality is that's not even enough.

Sadly, that is the case all over Sierra Leone because the country is at a standstill. People are now doing odd jobs just to survive. Even people like graduates are doing jobs that I don't think they should be doing because of their level of education, but they are doing it just for survival. People are sitting at home idly, not doing anything, it's not easy. Many people are moving around just to find things to do, just little things to survive.

Sierra Leone is a very social country, and we love being around people, but because of the pandemic the country as a whole has just stood still. There has been an increase in youth violence within communities and other crimes. People are grumbling, people are crying.

The challenges I'm having as an individual is that the thing that I love most has stopped. And it's proving hard to train to keep up my fitness. I work from 9:00am until 3:30pm so all the other time is resting. By 5:00pm I go for my individual training. Then I come back home to rest. But I've been putting on weight because I can't do enough exercise.

The one good thing is I have time with my family. Due to COVID-19, my mother is now living with my family. But from my two kids, one is staying with my elder sister and her daughter in Waterloo, which is 75 miles away.

It's tough but I thank God for keeping me and my family alive.

And I am hopeful. One thing that has made me feel more comfortable is that I read an article by the World Health Organisation which said coronavirus will not be eradicated 100 per cent. It's going to live with us, like how we have malaria and other diseases. And that has made some ease here in my country and I believe that there is life after corona. Even if we eradicate it 90 per cent, there is still life.

So I am praying that one day this will be over. And if the government announces tomorrow that we will go back to normality, then I will go back to my training straight away. I still believe there are other Paralympic Games coming. I cannot wait to be ready.

IPC updates

Tokyo 2020 Qualification - three more sports added

Canoe, Cycling and Football 5-a-side were added this week to the list of sports with updated regulations on Tokyo 2020 qualification. This takes the

number with updated regulations to 19 of the 22 sports on the programme of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games.

The list of sports covered now with updated qualification regulations is: archery, athletics, badminton, boccia, canoe, cycling, equestrian, football 5-a-side, goalball, powerlifting, rowing, shooting, sitting volleyball, swimming, taekwondo, triathlon, wheelchair basketball, wheelchair fencing and wheelchair rugby.

We are in regular contact with all Ifs, and we hope to have a complete set of qualification regulations published in the coming weeks.

The most up-to-date version of the Tokyo 2020 qualification regulations can always be found here: <https://www.paralympic.org/tokyo-2020/qualification-criteria>

Para sport event postponements and cancellations

The list of cancelled Para sport events remains on the IPC website and is being regularly updated. You can find details [here](#).

World Health Organisation update

According to WHO's latest Daily Situation Dashboard on 4 June 2020 16:17 CEST, the number of confirmed worldwide cases has risen to over 6.4 million. John Hopkins University of Medicine is reporting that nearly 2.8 million people have fully recovered.

Again, the news is mixed as the wave effect of the pandemic ensures that different parts of the world are impacted in separate ways. In Europe, the tide is receding – on Tuesday 2 June, Europe reported the fewest number of new cases since 22 March. However, in the Americas, the tide is rising. More than 100,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported to WHO for each day in the last week. The Americas continues to account for the most cases, and for several weeks, the number of cases reported each day have been more than the rest of the world put together. WHO are especially worried about Central and South America.

This week WHO has published a document with new advice for organisers holding mass gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The 'Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19' document was published on Friday 29 May. This is the first

updated advice on mass gatherings to be provided since the WHO's initial advice on 19 March.

The aim is to 'provide guidance to host governments, health authorities and national or international organisers of mass gatherings on containing risks of COVID-19 transmission associated with mass gathering events'.

WHO detail how mass gatherings 'have important implications on the psychological well-being of large number of individuals', and 'can play an important role in promoting healthy behaviours (e.g. sports), provide employment for a great number of people, and could leave a legacy of improved assets or capacities developed as a result of hosting a mass gathering event'.

The guidance, which outlines a five-stage process that event organisers should consider, concludes that: 'events associated with a low or very low risk of COVID-19 transmission and low strain on the health system may be considered sufficiently safe to proceed. Events with a moderate, high, or very high level of risk might not be sufficiently safe to proceed and would require a more thorough application of prevention and control measures. If the risk of spreading COVID-19 remains significant after application of all control measures, postponing or cancelling the planned event should be considered'.

You can access '[Key planning recommendations for mass gatherings in the context of COVID-19](#)' on this link.

The IPC continues to use the WHO and their [site](#) as its main source of information regarding the COVID-19. It provides regular situation reports and have a wide range of guidance on health and protection, travel advice, as well as extensive myth-busting and technical guidance sections.

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service

WHO's WhatsApp messaging service is providing the latest news and information on coronavirus in seven languages: Arabic, English, French, Hindi, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish.

Arabic

Send "مرحبا" to +41 22 501 70 23 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017023?text=مرحبا

English

Send "hi" to +41 79 893 18 92 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41798931892?text=hi

French

Send "salut" to +41 22 501 72 98 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017298?text=salut

Hindi

Send "नमस्ते" to +41 22 501 73 41 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017341?text=नमस्ते>

Italian

Send "ciao" to +41 22 501 78 34 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017834?text=ciao>

Spanish

Send "hola" to +41 22 501 76 90 on WhatsApp

wa.me/41225017690?text=hola

Portuguese

Send "oi" to +41 22 501 77 35 on WhatsApp

<https://wa.me/41225017735?text=oi>

Latest IPC media statements

Potential impact of COVID-19 on Para Athletes (drafted 18 March, reviewed 30 April)

At the IPC the health and well-being of Para athletes is our top priority and we are working hard to gather as much information as possible on the potential impact of COVID-19 to provide appropriate advice.

Concern has been raised that Para athletes may be at more risk of severe disease from COVID-19, in the same way as has been stated for elderly people and for people with certain underlying health conditions.

However, the Paralympic athlete population is not a homogeneous group. Para athletes are all individuals with very different underlying conditions and health needs, so the notion of a one-size-fits-all approach to COVID-19 is not appropriate or representative of an individual athlete's risk.

Nevertheless, because of the severity of the impairment or any associated immune deficit or chronic condition, some athletes could be more

vulnerable. There are no current studies on the potential impacts of coronavirus on Para athletes. The honest answer is that we don't know because this is a new strain of coronavirus and there are very little data available.

Consultation with the IPC Medical Committee and International Federation medical experts, as well as information provided by the WHO, indicates that there has been no evidence that an athlete with disability in general have a higher risk of contracting COVID-19.

Para athletes are also more experienced than is the general population to following hand hygiene, coughing etiquette and general infection avoidance procedures as part of illness prevention education - this has been a principle of Para athlete education for some time. However, at this time we all should be even more vigilant in this regard.

The IPC will continue to seek advice from the WHO, but ultimately athletes are the best judge of their own body and their medical needs.

Our advice for Para athletes is that they should follow the current medical guidance from the WHO and their national guidelines on prevention and seek advice from medical professionals. We would urge any athlete displaying the symptoms to report to their local medical authorities without delay.

Important website links

- [World Health Organisation](https://www.who.int)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov)